

CONCERNING THE WAY

August 11, 2009

LESSON 69: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



Chapter 14 – Three Angels and Three Messages

In the last chapter we saw the two beasts – the Antichrist and the False Prophet, rise up, gain control of the whole world, and force everyone to submit to the Antichrist in worship. Everyone is required to take a “mark” of the Beast and those who don’t are persecuted and killed. Most people in the world will be convinced that he is god, because it will look like he was assassinated and came back to life.

In this chapter, we have another one of John’s interludes, where he stops the chronology of events in the Tribulation and pauses to look at things which will happen later on.

Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

In contrast to the multitude that took the mark of the beast in the last chapter, these people have the “mark” of God the Father and God the Son written on their foreheads. These are the 144,000 Jewish witnesses that were sealed for service to God back in chapter 7.

Where is Mount Zion? It is also known as the city of David and refers to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 11:5, Psalms 2:6, Isaiah 2:3). Zion can also mean the future Jerusalem in the Millennium during the Kingdom age (Isaiah 1:27; 2:3-4; 4:1-6; Joel 3:16; Zechariah 1:16-17; 8:3-8; Micah 4:3-8, Romans 11:25-26). All of these verses obviously refer to the earthly Zion. Hebrews 12:22-24 refers to Zion as the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, which will come down to earth at the end of the Millennium. Ezekiel 28:13-15 and Revelation 21:10 refer also to the heavenly Jerusalem. Amillennialists like to spiritualize the term Zion to mean the Christian Church, but, as usual, that makes absolutely no sense.

God chose Zion as His eternal dwelling place (Psalm 132:13), the location of His temple. He promised that He would NEVER forget the earthly Zion:

Isaiah 49:14-16 But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, And the Lord has forgotten me." (15) "Can a woman forget her nursing child And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. (16) "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

Joel 2:31-32 "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (32) "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.

The BIG question here is where is this? Is it on earth or is it in heaven? It makes a huge difference because if it is on earth, then God has protected the 144,000 people throughout the terrible events of the Tribulation. If it is heaven, then all of the 144,000 have been killed, probably through martyrdom, and are now in heaven.

1. If the 144,000 are the ones singing the new song (Revelation 14:3), they are said to be “before the four living creatures, and the elders”. In every other mention of the living creatures and elders in the book of Revelation, they are in heaven (5:6, 8, 11, 14; 7:11; 19:4).
2. It appears that the scene takes place “before the throne of God” (Revelation 14:3). The natural conclusion is that this is the throne of the Father in heaven (4:2-3; 5:1, 7; 19:4).
3. The Lamb is *standing*, like He was previously seen in heaven in the midst of the throne (Revelation 5:6; 7:17), but in the Millennium the Lamb would more likely be seated on His throne, the throne of David (Revelation 3:21).
4. The 144,000 are said to be redeemed *from the earth* (Revelation 4:3). They were redeemed *from among men* (4:4). The implication is that they are no longer on the earth among men.

The main problem with this being a heavenly scene is, what happened to the sealing of the 144,000 for protection back in chapter 7:1-3? Well, it’s possible that they will only be protected for a time, like the Two Witnesses were. Also, it only says they will be protected from the direct judgments of God, it never says they will be protected from the persecution of the Beast.

“The sealing they received protects them only from the wrath of God, not from the wrath of the dragon and the beast (cf. Rev. 12:12). These are the same 144,000 as in Revelation 7, but they are also the same as the rest of the woman’s seed in Revelation 12:17, the witnesses to whom the dragon has access because of their refusal to worship the beast (Rev. 13:15). . . . They are the vanguard who bear the brunt of the struggle against the beast and pay the price of their own lives.” Robert Thomas

There is another interpretation here, one that splits the scene between heaven and earth. This would be at the end of the Tribulation after Jesus has returned to the earth and is in Jerusalem. The 144,000 are standing with him, either having survived the Tribulation by the protection of God, or having been martyred for the faith during the Tribulation and have returned with Christ. In this interpretation, we would be looking at a preview of the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom, with Jesus standing on Mount Zion with these people, accompanied by praise from heaven, which we’re told about in the next verse:

Revelation 14:2-3 **I also heard a sound coming out of heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder. Now the sound I heard was like that made by harpists playing their harps, (3) and they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one was able to learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth.**

John apparently heard three different sounds. This would make me think that John is on earth, with the 144,000 and the Lamb, and he hears these sounds from heaven. This is probably a heavenly choir. And only the 144,000 could learn the song because they had experienced the persecution of the Tribulation period.

Revelation 14:4-5 **These are the ones who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from humanity as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, (5) and no lie was found on their lips; they are blameless.**

This does not mean they were sinless, because they needed redemption just like all of us. We don’t really know why they never got married and remained celibate, unless marriage by this time has become rare. But in their dedication to their service to God, they choose not to have relations with women. This reminds me of what Paul says about marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:1, 7-9, 32-33). It certainly would have been difficult for them to be married, considering their mission. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes (John 10:27, 12:26), they didn’t stray from His will or His teachings.

“These were redeemed from humanity as firstfruits” – this phrase causes most commentators to believe that these 144,000 were martyred for their faith, that they were protected for a time while they worked in their ministry of spreading the gospel, and then towards the end of the Tribulation, when the Antichrist pursues those who did not take his mark, they are killed. “Firstfruits” is a technical term in Mosaic ceremonial law meaning the first portion of grain and fruit harvests and flocks to God. The first part of a harvest was dedicated to God. These 144,000 were purchased by the blood of the Lamb as the firstfruits of the spiritual awakening of Israel (Ezekiel 37, Romans 11:25-26). This group represents the beginning of those mentioned in Jeremiah 31:

Jeremiah 31:33-34 "But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land," says the LORD. "I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my people. (34) "People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me," says the LORD. "For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done."

This will ultimately be fulfilled at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Back to Revelation...

Revelation 14:6-7 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, and he had an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation, tribe, language, and people. (7) He declared in a loud voice: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has arrived, and worship the one who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water!"

Another angel flew with a similar message of warning in Revelation 11:15. God is still merciful here, giving people another chance to repent. This happens before the institution of the mark of the beast, as we learn in verse 9. The angel is warning people to worship God, not the beast. This is probably not the entire message the angel says, just a summary, since it says that the angel proclaimed the “eternal gospel”.

Today it is the Church’s responsibility to spread the gospel message of Christ, but that will change after the Rapture. During the Tribulation, God will appoint certain ones to preach the gospel – the 144,000 Jewish witnesses, the Two Witnesses, and the angel spoken of here. And it is the Eternal Gospel, the same message of Christ that we preach today.

Revelation 14:8 A second angel followed the first, declaring: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great city! She made all the nations drink of the wine of her immoral passion."

This is the first time Babylon is mentioned in the book of Revelation. Many scholars and teachers believe that the name Babylon should not be taken as the literal city of Babylon here. Most believe it is Rome (the Catholic Church), but there are also those who believe it is Jerusalem, or even New York. Some scholars believe that this is the literal city of Babylon of history on the banks of the Euphrates River. It has been a very influential city throughout history, and they believe it will be rebuilt at the time of the end and will ultimately be destroyed by God. I believe we cannot be dogmatic about this.

And it is spoken of as if it’s already happened, that’s how sure it’s judgment is (Revelation 16:9, 18:2-3,8, 10, 18, Jeremiah 30:5-7, 51:8, Isaiah 21:9-10). This is a preview of the final fall of Babylon in chapter 18, so we’ll wait until we get there to talk more about it.

Revelation 14:9-11 A third angel followed the first two, declaring in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and takes the mark on his forehead or his hand, (10) that person will also drink of the wine of God's anger that has been mixed undiluted in the cup of his wrath, and he will be tortured with fire and sulfur in front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb. (11) And the smoke from their torture will go up forever and ever, and those who worship the beast and his image will have no rest day or night, along with anyone who receives the mark of his name."

Here people will be clearly warned not to take the mark, but most will ignore it. This is a good indication of what these times will be like. Angels will be visibly flying through the air preaching the gospel and warning them not to take the mark, but most will not listen.

Some think these three angels may not be literally flying visibly around the world, but working behind the scenes spreading these messages. I don't really have a problem with that; the message is what's important.

Verse 10 tells us why the last sequence of judgments are in the form of bowls being poured out. It is God's cup of wrath that will be poured out. Undiluted means His wrath will be at full strength, which is very frightening! There will be no grace or hope mixed with it. Those who don't believe in a literal hell have a hard time getting around this verse. For those who take the mark, at least, there will be agonizing torture for eternity.

"In front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb". This is an interesting thought. Apparently the ones thrown into the lake of fire will be visible from heaven, to Christ, the angels, and even the saints (Isaiah 66:23-24). Here Isaiah is speaking of conditions in the Millennial Kingdom, after all the enemies of Christ have been destroyed in the battle of Armageddon:

Isaiah 66:22-24 "For just as the new heavens and the new earth I am about to make will remain standing before me," says the LORD, "so your descendants and your name will remain. (23) From one month to the next and from one Sabbath to the next, all people will come to worship me," says the LORD. (24) "They will go out and observe the corpses of those who rebelled against me, for the maggots that eat them will not die, and the fire that consumes them will not die out. All people will find the sight abhorrent."

I don't really know why the Lord leaves these burning corpses out where everyone can see them during the Kingdom, unless it is as a warning to those who come after about what happens to people who rebel against Christ. Many people have trouble believing that a loving God will someday punish sinners.

"I wish to present a paragraph or two from one of my teachers, Dr. R. A. Torrey. I sat in class as a boy of eighteen and heard Dr. Torrey lecture on the future destiny of unbelievers. . . . He said, "In conclusion, two things are certain. First, the more closely men walk with God and the more devoted they become to His service, the more likely they are to believe this doctrine. Many men tell us they love their fellow men too much to believe this doctrine; but the men who show their love in more practical ways than sentimental protestations about it, the men who show their love for their fellow men as Jesus Christ showed His, by laying down their lives for them, they believe it, even as Jesus Christ Himself believed it.

Second, men who accept a loose doctrine regarding the ultimate penalty of Sin (Restorationism or Universalism or Annihilationism) lose their power for God. They may be very clever at argument and zealous in proselytizing, but they are poor at soul-saving. They are seldom found beseeching men to be reconciled to God. They are more likely to be found trying to upset the faith of those already won by the

efforts of others, then winning men who have no faith at all. If you really believe the doctrine of endless, conscious torment of the impenitent, and the doctrine really gets hold of you, you will work as you never worked before for the salvation of the lost. If you in any wise abate this doctrine, it will abate your zeal.”
Barnhouse

Revelation 14:12 This requires the steadfast endurance of the saints — those who obey God's commandments and hold to their faith in Jesus.

“This” is the act of refusing the mark of the beast, which for many will mean certain death. The endurance of the saints is accepting God’s sovereign control over their lives, which we read last chapter in verse ten. And their faith is proven by their works.

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write this: 'Blessed are the dead, those who die in the Lord from this moment on!' “ “Yes," says the Spirit, "so they can rest from their hard work, because their deeds will follow them."

This must be the voice of God, and it could be the Lamb or the Father. The Holy Spirit then joins in agreement with this blessing. God reminds those living in that time that to be martyred for their faith will bring them a special blessing. At this point in the Tribulation it will be so difficult to live as a believer, death will be a relief, a true rest. Revelation 20:4 also mentions this blessing for these martyrs.

All of us who die in the Lord are promised immediate rest (Isaiah 57:1, Daniel 12:13, Luke 23:43). There is no delay, and no purgatory.

“The righteous who die “in the Lord” do not suffer torment or punishment after death, as in purgatory. There is no such place as purgatory known to Scripture, and even the Apocrypha contains firm testimony against such a view in a remarkable statement at Wisdom 3:1, “But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them.” Jerome Smith

The idea of purgatory denies the perfect work of Christ and tries to add man’s imperfect works.

“The collection of [Roman Catholic] relics in 1509 included 5,005 fragments, the viewing of which reduced one’s time in purgatory by 1,443 years. By 1518 it is estimated that there were 17,443 pieces on display in twelve aisles. Included among them were such remarkable relics as a veil sprinkled with the blood of Christ, a twig of Moses’ burning bush, and a piece of bread from the Last Supper. By 1520 the collection had grown—despite Luther’s opposition—to 19,013 holy pieces. Those who viewed the relics on All Saint’s Day and made the required contribution would receive from the pope an indulgence that would reduce time spent in purgatory—either by themselves or others—by up to 1,902,202 years and 270 days.” William R. Estep

“their deeds will follow them” – God knows your good works (Hebrews 6:10).

Revelation 14:14 Then I looked, and a white cloud appeared, and seated on the cloud was one like a son of man! He had a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.

Sickles were used in Biblical days for cutting grain, but sometimes used for pruning grapevines. Jesus has sown the good seed (Matthew 13:37) and here He is getting ready to harvest the wheat. So this again is looking forward to the end of the Tribulation. Some think there are two aspects of this harvest described next – the harvest of redemption, and the harvest of wrath.

Revelation 14:15-16 Then another angel came out of the temple, shouting in a loud voice to the one seated on the cloud, "Use your sickle and start to reap, because the time to reap has come, since the earth's harvest is ripe!" (16) So the one seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

The patience and grace of God finally comes to an end, because He knows no one else will come. This is the end of the age, the long period where both good and evil were allowed to grow side by side. Now the two will be separated in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50). The reaping is worldwide. This is considered by some to be the harvest of redemption.

"This, then, is our Lord's return at the end of the tribulation to harvest the bodies of the saints who die during the tribulation (Rev. 14:13) so as to reunite them with their souls, which, up to this point, will have been under the altar before God (Rev. 6:9). This reaping is the gathering of the harvest into Christ's barn (Mtt. 13:30). . . . The living redeemed will still be on earth, but the bodies of all deceased saints will have been resurrected and taken to Heaven. This addresses the state of all the saved during the tribulation."
Mills

This is the harvest John the Baptist mentioned in Matthew 3:

Matthew 3:11-12 "I baptize you with water, for repentance, but the one coming after me is more powerful than I am — I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (12) His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clean out his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with inextinguishable fire."

The term and with fire is better translated "or with fire." The immediate context certainly indicates that to be baptized with fire is the result of judgment (notice the reference to purging and burning in the next verse). Other than the visible tongues (billows) of fire which appeared over the disciples' heads at Pentecost, references to fire burning up unprofitable chaff refer to judgment rather than cleansing. The threshing fan (Mtt. 3:12) refers to a wooden shovel used for tossing grain into the wind in order to blow away the lighter chaff, leaving the good grain to settle in a pile. The chaff would then be swept up and burned, the unquenchable fire refers to the eternal punishment of hell or the lake of fire. Jerry Falwell, Edward D. Hindson, and Michael Woodrow Kroll – KJV Bible Commentary

Let's read in Matthew where Jesus talks about this time at the end of the age:

Matthew 13:24-30 He presented them with another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a person who sowed good seed in his field. (25) But while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. (26) When the plants sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared. (27) So the slaves of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Then where did the weeds come from?' (28) He said, 'An enemy has done this.' so the slaves replied, 'Do you want us to go and gather them?' (29) But he said, 'No, since in gathering the weeds you may uproot the wheat with them. (30) Let both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time I will tell the reapers, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, but then gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

Matthew 13:36-43 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." (37) He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. (38) The field is the world and the good seed are the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the

evil one, (39) and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. (40) As the weeds are collected and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age. (41) The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom everything that causes sin as well as all lawbreakers. (42) They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. **The one who has ears had better listen!**

So you see Jesus had prophesied about this time that John is seeing here at the end of the Tribulation and the start of the Millennial Kingdom. Now let's continue on in Revelation 14:

Revelation 14:17-19 Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. (18) Another angel, who was in charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to the angel who had the sharp sickle, "Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes off the vine of the earth, because its grapes are now ripe." (19) So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the grapes from the vineyard of the earth and tossed them into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

This is the harvest of wrath. An angel swings this sickle. It is the final confrontation when God wipes out all His enemies at the 2nd coming of Christ (Isaiah 34:2-8; 63:1-6; Joel 3:12-14; Zephaniah 3:8; Revelation 19:15). Everyone on earth by this point has made the choice to worship either Christ or Antichrist. The prophet Joel saw this "vintage of wrath" associated with the Day of the Lord:

Joel 3:12-14 Let the nations be roused and let them go up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit in judgment on all the surrounding nations. (13) Rush forth with the sickle, for the harvest is ripe! Come, stomp the grapes, for the winepress is full! The vats overflow. Indeed, their evil is great! (14) Crowds, great crowds are in the valley of decision, for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision!

God allows evil to come to its full fruit before he brings judgment. He wants to give plenty of opportunities for people to repent and turn to Him. But his patience and mercy must eventually come to an end. Most people these days only concentrate on the Love aspect of the character of God. But Justice is as much part of His character as Love is. He must eventually judge sin to vindicate His character. He allows sin to ripen so that when He finally pours out His wrath, no one will be able to deny that He was right in doing so.

Revelation 14:20 Then the winepress was stomped outside the city, and blood poured out of the winepress up to the height of horses' bridles for a distance of almost two hundred miles.

This is a preview of the battle of Armageddon, which we'll see more about in upcoming chapters. The horses' bridles are most likely the horses of the enemy armies.

"The judgment of the nations in Joel 3:12-14 (which supplies the dual figures of harvest and vintage) takes place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, which traditions links with the Kidron valley lying between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. Zechariah 14:1-4 places the final battle on the outskirts of Jerusalem." Mounce, The Book of Revelation

Isaiah speaks of this time as well:

Isaiah 34:6-8 The LORD's sword is dripping with blood, it is covered with fat; it drips

with the blood of young rams and goats and is covered with the fat of rams' kidneys. For the LORD is holding a sacrifice in Bozrah, a bloody slaughter in the land of Edom. (7) Wild oxen will be slaughtered along with them, as well as strong bulls. Their land is drenched with blood, their soil is covered with fat. (8) For the LORD has planned a day of revenge, a time when he will repay Edom for her hostility toward Zion.

“The blood stretches for 1,600 furlongs, which is approximately two hundred miles. The two hundred miles may refer to the entire area from the Valley of Armageddon to Bozrah, which is about two hundred miles. Another possible explanation is that it refers to the round trip distance between Jerusalem and Bozrah. The fighting will begin in Jerusalem and move to Bozrah (100 miles), and with the Second Coming, will return back from Bozrah to the Valley of Jehoshaphat (another 100 miles). But the best explanation is based on Jeremiah 49:20-22 . . . In the context (see Jer. 49:13-14), this passage is dealing with the Campaign of Armageddon. The massive blood-letting that begins at Bozrah begins moving south down the Arabah until it empties in the Red Sea at the present-day cities of Eilat and Akaba. The distance from there to Jerusalem is about two hundred miles.” Arnold Fructenbaum

This is obviously describing a slaughter unlike anything that's ever happened in history. Some think this is just hyperbole, but if that is so, why is the distance given so exact? This amount of blood can only be imagined if you consider the vast numbers of the Antichrist's armies that are destroyed plus all the other unrepentant earth-dwellers.

“Let us consider the biblical portrayal of the size of this disaster: this river of blood is 184 miles long, and its depth is the height of a horse's bit. Now, if a horse's bit is four feet high, we can calculate the volume required to fill a blood stream of varying widths, and as we know that the typical quantity of blood in a person is six quarts, we can then calculate how many people it would take to supply the blood. The blood from one billion human beings would make a stream not even twenty yards wide over this length of 184 miles (a trough 4' deep with radiused sides would average 53 feet in width to hold the blood from one billion humans). If these figures are taken literally—and surely, when we recognize the literality of fulfilled prophecy in Daniel, they must be—then it is clear that God portrays the slaying of all unregenerate mankind. Notably, as the width is not given, we cannot determine the population of the earth at this time.” Mills, Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John

So this is what's coming at the end of the Tribulation.

Chapter 15 – The Final Plagues

Revelation 12, 13, and 14 was an interlude where the scenes of judgments being poured out by God upon the earth are interrupted to illustrate other important events associated with the Tribulation. Now at Revelation 15, the scene shifts back to the judgments—specifically the preparations for the final set of seven judgments to be poured out upon the earth dwellers and the kingdom of the Beast. This is an introduction to those judgments.

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another great and astounding sign in heaven: seven angels who have seven final plagues (they are final because in them God's anger is completed).

These seven angels will pour out their bowl judgments in the next chapter, and with those judgments God's wrath will be complete. God's wrath was already being poured out by the 6th seal (Revelation 6:16-17), so the church, which will not see the wrath of God (Revelation 3:10), has long before been taken in the Rapture.

Revelation 15:2 Then I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and his image and the number of his name. They were standing by the sea of glass, holding harps given to them by God.

These are martyred people who did not give in to the Beast, they stayed faithful to the Lamb and did not follow the Antichrist. It's interesting that it says that they conquered the beast. The Antichrist thought he was conquering the saints, but in reality it was the saints who were victorious because when they died they went immediately into the presence of God to enjoy Him forever. These may be some of the same people mentioned in chapter 7:13-17 as those who came out of the Great Tribulation.

"Those who stand on the crystal pavement are those who have emerged victorious. They have not abandoned their faith nor succumbed to the threats of Antichrist. They are the overcomers to whom the seven letters hold out promise of eating of the tree of life (2:7), protection from the second death (2:11), hidden manna (2:17), authority over the nations (2:26), white garments (3:5), the honor of becoming a pillar in the temple of God (3:12), and the privilege of sitting with Christ on his throne (3:21). Little wonder they break out in song!" Robert Mounce

Revelation 15:3-4 They sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and astounding are your deeds, Lord God, the All-Powerful! Just and true are your ways, King over the nations! (4) Who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name, because you alone are holy? All nations will come and worship before you for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Moses sang a similar song to commemorate the victory God gave Israel at the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 15. The song recognizes the uniqueness of God. Portions of this song are also found in Deuteronomy 32 and Psalms 86. The Song of the Lamb we have already seen in Revelation 5:9-14. The end of verse 4 will be fulfilled in the Millennium when all nations will come to worship him in Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:20-23).

Revelation 15:5-6 After these things I looked, and the temple (the tent of the testimony) was opened in heaven, (6) and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, dressed in clean bright linen, wearing wide golden belts around their chests.

"After these things" – this happens after the mark of the beast was instituted, but before the seven bowls of wrath are poured out, so we are definitely in the 2nd half of the Tribulation here. The heavenly temple opens and the seven angels come out with the last seven judgments. The clean bright linen represents the righteous character of what they are about to do. And they are wearing golden belts like Jesus was seen wearing in Revelation 1:13, which signifies their royal priesthood.

Revelation 15:7 Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God who lives forever and ever,

The wrath of God in these bowls represent the response of God to the prayers of the saints of God over the ages to avenge the blood of the martyrs (Revelation 6:10) and to bring His kingdom to the earth (Matthew 6:10, Luke 18:7-8).

In the Old Testament, once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would take a bowl of blood from a sacrificial animal into the Holy of Holies and dump it on the Mercy Seat over the Ark of the Covenant, to offer atonement for the sins of the people. Since the earth dwellers and followers of Antichrist refuse the sacrifice of Christ for their sins, these angels are given bowls of God's wrath instead of the blood of Jesus.

And in the next chapter they will pour them on the earth instead of the Mercy Seat.

Revelation 15:8 and the temple was filled with smoke from God's glory and from his power. Thus no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues from the seven angels were completed.

This is a very mysterious verse. God fills the temple with His Shekinah glory, which we have seen Him manifest at times on earth (Exodus 40:34-35, 1 Kings 8:10-11, Isaiah 6:1-4). It looks like God wants some privacy during the final outpouring of His wrath. It may indicate the Holiness of the moment.

"It may suggest that God will, at this point in history, seal the doors of Heaven, making it impossible for any who have not hitherto accepted Jesus as Savior to do so. In other words, from this time forth until God has executed the human race, no additional souls will be saved. This is reminiscent of the previous great judgment, for, in the age before the flood, God said, "My Spirit will not strive with man forever" (Gen. 6:3). What a fearsome prospect: God closeted in His sanctuary until His wrath is satisfied, and no one able to approach Him. Sin will cause this; sin is never a light matter." Monty S. Mills

Or it could be that God is grieved about what He is about to do and doesn't want to be disturbed:

"What insight we should have here of the holiness of God, and may we not be allowed to think that behind this hiding smoke the heart of God is weeping, even as the Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem, as He acknowledged that all the efforts of His mercy has been in vain, and that the city refused all of His offers of pardon and love? And as we shall be in Heaven at that moment, yet outside of the presence of God, shall we not know that he suffers alone for the horror of the sin that separates men forever from Himself and forces Him to send them away to outer darkness forever?" Donald Grey Barnhouse

This is all just speculation. God requires privacy at this point and we have to respect that (Lamentations 3:44, Romans 11:33).

"Such intense judgment to come! Such grief on the part of the Creator for the creature which refuses to acknowledge Him. Yet He must judge for His very holiness and justice require it! Every person born will drink from one or the other of two cups. Either they will drink the cup of salvation (Luke 22:17-20) or they will drink the cup of the wrath of God (Rev. 14:10)." Tony Garland

We'll close this lesson with two very pertinent verses. If you have not committed your life to Jesus Christ, NOW is the time to do it!

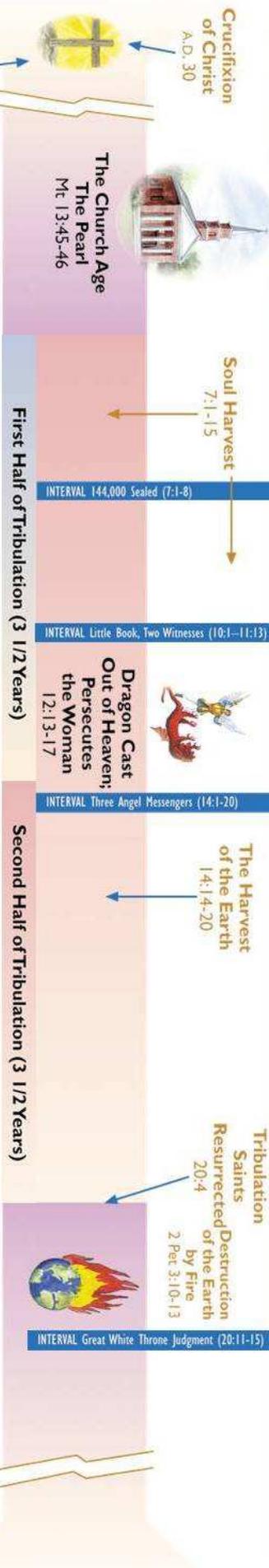
John 3:36 The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him.

2 Corinthians 6:2 For he says, "I heard you at the acceptable time, and in the day of salvation I helped you." Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation !

Next lesson: The final seven judgments are poured out.

Book of Revelation

Title	Salutation	8:1-1:1
What Thou Hast Seen	The Vision	1:9-20
The Things Which Are	The Seven Churches	2:1-3:22
The Heavenly Vision 4:1-5:14		
RAPTURE 1 Ths 4:16-17		
Seven-sealed Book		
ONE	White Horse—Conquering Power	
TWO	Red Horse—War and Bloodshed	
THREE	Black Horse—Famine	
FOUR	Pale Horse—Pestilence and Death	
FIVE	Souls under the Altar—Martyrs	
SIX	Great Earthquake	
SEVEN	Silence, Golden Censer	
ONE	Hail, Fire, Blood	
TWO	Burning Mountain	
THREE	Star Wormwood	
FOUR	Sun Diminished	
FIVE	Plague of Locusts First Woe	
SIX	Plague of Horsemen Second Woe	
SEVEN	Christ Rules	
ONE	Woman—Israel	
TWO	Dragon—Satan Third Woe	
THREE	Male Child—Christ	
FOUR	Michael—The Archangel	
FIVE	Remnant—Saved Israel	
SIX	Antichrist—Beast out of the Sea	
SEVEN	False Prophet—Beast out of the Earth	
ONE	Boils	
TWO	Sea to Blood	
THREE	Rivers to Blood	
FOUR	Great Heat	
FIVE	Darkness	
SIX	Euphrates Dried Up	
SEVEN	Hail	
ONE	Devoid of Human Life	
TWO	Burned with Fire	
THREE	Destroyed in One Hour	
FOUR	People Afraid to Enter	
FIVE	Riches Brought to Nought	
SIX	Violently Overthrow	
SEVEN	All Activity Ceases	
Battle of Armageddon		
Marriage of the Lamb		
Return of Christ with the Church and His Angels		
Antichrist and False Prophet Cast into the Lake of Fire		
Return of Christ 19:1-21		
Satan Bound		
Millennial Kingdom 20:1-10		
The Thousand Years		
Israel Rules the Nations		
Satan Loosed		
ONE	New Heaven	
TWO	New Earth	
THREE	New Jerusalem	
FOUR	New Universal Order	
FIVE	New Temple	
SIX	New Light	
SEVEN	New Paradise	
Farewell Testimony 22:6-21		



The Present Age

Resurrection of Christ
Mk 16:6
1 Pet 1:3

Crucifixion of Christ
A.D. 30

The Church Age
The Pearl
Mt 13:45-46

First Half of Tribulation (3 1/2 Years)

- Soul Harvest**
7:1-15
- Dragon Cast Out of Heaven, Persecutes the Woman**
12:13-17

Second Half of Tribulation (3 1/2 Years)

- The Harvest of the Earth**
14:14-20
- Tribulation Saints Resurrected by Fire**
20:4
2 Pet 3:10-13

Age of Ages

- Lake of Fire**
• Satan's Doom
• Sinner's Doom
20:10-15

The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter

- The Seven Seals**
6:1-8:5
- The Seven Trumpets**
8:7-11:19
- The Seven Key Figures**
12:1-13:18
- The Seven Bows**
15:1-16:21
- Seven Dooms on Babylon**
17:1-18:24
- Return of Christ**
19:1-21
- Millennial Kingdom**
20:1-10
- The Thousand Years**
- Israel Rules the Nations**
- Satan Loosed**
- Seven New Things**
21:1-22:5
- Farewell Testimony**
22:6-21

